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Homeland Security

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DHS CONTINUES DEPLOYMENT OF e-PASSPORT READERS
Using biometric security features to advance border security and further reduce fraudulent document use

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) today announced that e-Passport readers are now in place and processing holders of e-Passports at additional airports, including New York JFK International Airport, Los Angeles International Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport and Newark Liberty International Airport.

Installation of the new readers is the next in a series of deployments that began at the San Francisco International Airport in September and will continue at U.S. airports through the next few weeks in preparation for an October 26, 2006, deadline requiring that U.S. ports of entry have the capability to compare and authenticate data in e-Passports issued by Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries. Since deploying e-Passport readers at San Francisco International Airport three weeks ago, DHS has processed more than 1,944 e-Passports.

Deployment of e-Passport readers is another step in a process to further enhance the security of international travel documents while continuing to facilitate the flow of legitimate travel and trade to the United States. An e-Passport securely identifies the individual, defends against identity theft, protects privacy and makes it difficult for individuals to cross borders using fraudulent documents.

The e-Passport carries the international e-Passport symbol on the cover and contains a contactless chip with the passport holder's biographic information and a biometric identifier, such as a digital photograph of the holder. All e-Passports issued by VWP countries and the United States have critical security features which prevent the unauthorized reading or "skimming" of data stored on the chip.

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DHS requires that passports issued by VWP countries on or after October 26, 2006, must be e-Passports to be valid for entry into the United States without a visa. These e-Passports must comply with technical standards established by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

When applying to enter the United States, travelers who have a valid machine-readable passport with a digital photograph do not need to obtain a new e-Passport until the existing passport expires, if the digital photograph passport was issued before October 26, 2006.

The inspection process at a U.S. port of entry does not change for an e-Passport holder. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will have the ability to read the e-Passports' chip at inspection booths displaying the international e-Passport symbol.

During the past two years, the U.S. government has been involved in efforts to work with VWP countries to test technical standards making e-Passports interoperable with readers at U.S. ports of entry.

The 27 countries participating in the VWP include: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Approximately 13 million people each year travel to the United States under the VWP to study, conduct business, visit family or tour the country.

Visitors who wish to verify whether or not their passports meet the requirements and deadlines for VWP travelers, can find details at *http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/vwp_travelerguide.pdf* or contact a U.S. consular office in their country.

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Editor's Note: *B-roll that shows travelers entering the United States by presenting e-Passports is available upon request.*